

Slavery
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LETTER

TO THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

BY

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COUNSELLOR AT LAW, ETC.

WASHINGTON CITY, OCT., 1862.

To the President of the United States:

SIR: The subject that now absorbs every faculty and affection of the public mind, is the Rebellion. It has been difficult, from the beginning, fully to fathom this outbreak, so treacherous and clandestine, as well as heartless and blood-thirsty, was it, above all naturally conceivable measure; but it, now, directly confronts our very EXISTENCE as a nation.

What is the cause of this great sea of Sedition? and what the spirit of its overflow? It is SLAVERY. Without slavery, the South would have been industrious, and virtuous, instead of being indolent and debauched; and, with the blessed influences of our wide-spread facilities of intercourse by travel, we would, now, as a nation of States, have all been full of love, peace, and mutual interchange of benefit. What, then, sir, should be your course, armed, as you are, with all the powers of WAR, as President; and as commander-in-chief; and as the great EXECUTIVE head of the nation, and interpreter, and enforcer of our organic law, and all statutory enactments? It is to ABOLISH slavery at once, totally, and uncompromisingly. This, and this only, will exorcise the virus that inflames the blood of the South, and that, also, keeps, as we may well suppose, the decisive blessing of ALMIGHTY God upon our arms; and, again, we may well suppose that the spirit of God is anxious to assist us, but cannot, *morally*, do so, until our course is one of moral adaptation. The South should have liberated their slaves the moment our INDEPENDENCE was established; but instead of this, she has, ever since,—now more than three quarters of a century, kept millions of these human beings, just like ourselves, in bondage; and, from time to time, put upon them chains, and locks, and yokes, and tasks, and inflictions too gross and too fearful to name, and made of slavery a perma-

nent system, and a boast, and an "INSTITUTION, (an appropriate *classicality*, indeed!) and spreading it further, and wider, to become PERPETUAL. What, then, could we have expected, less, or other, than this very WAR?—in order to produce another "Red Sea," and another overwhelm of the "hosts of Pharaoh?"

But, have you the legal power, Sir, to abolish slavery? I have no doubt of it. There is no *prohibition* in the Constitution; and there is a great national NECESSITY for doing it—the nation's EXISTENCE, this very hour, trembling in a doubtful scale. Could not the PEOPLE legally do it? The people possess all power next to God; and you, Sir, represent the People; and are answerable for the safety of the Nation. All that there is in the Constitution on the subject of slavery, in view of anything in the nature of obligation on the part of the people of the free States, is the right of the South to the rendition of absconding slaves; and this right has been forfeited by every slave State in the Union. But, Sir, we will discriminate between these States; we will weigh, in charity, the case of each one. The people of this country are an amiable people, and they know how to be considerate and generous. We will take up, and look at Maryland, valued by us almost even more than ever, now she is rescued; she being, as the "lost sheep in the wilderness," more joyed in than "the ninety and nine." Then, there is the more unfortunate Kentucky; and, also, the long-tried, and doubly-tried Missouri; and as to the Union men in all the seceding States, who shall have been faithful to the end, we will press them to our heart-of-hearts, and *give them all we have*.

Doubt not, Sir, your moral power to issue one more Proclaim of Freedom; one that shall reach the end of the living Earth, and fill with a joyous and endless reverberation every hill and valley under Heaven. This would, at once, purify and simplify the *Task* under which the Nation reels to her base; and it would unite the hearts of all mankind in our behalf. As for its strengthening the Rebel cause, for the time being, I believe no such thing. All the phials of their wrath are already unstopped, whilst what we most want, now, is that enthusiastic *moral* force which a new accession to freedom always inspires.

I pray you, Sir, do as I suggest. In the name of a still *morally* diseased and DYING country, I call upon you to do it. You owe this to the Spirit that, in its confiding regard, invited you from an amiable obscurity to the civic Chair of a Mighty People. Let us create an Epoch of an unheard of magnitude! We have heard of a Romulus, and an Alfred; an Alexander, a Cæsar, a Hannibal, a Peter the Great, and a first Napoleon; and now, let the ear of the whole world be blessed with a greater and a holier voice than them all—this Exploit of the American people, in this closing part of the nineteenth century.

Now, Sir, is the time. It is the eve of sixty days of battle, in which we shall need the *sweep* of a new fervor of heroic LIBERTY. Wait not for Congress. She will bring along with her DEMA-

GOGUES, hanging upon her skirts like a meretricious Bevy on the rear of a campaign, together with endless controversy, to mystery, and enfeeble, and, perhaps, to patch up a state of things worse than the majestic unhappiness of a total ruin—the last ghastly writhe of our young and gigantic Nation. Mark, Sir! The step I ask of you, in the name of the people, will **SAVE YOUR COUNTRY**. Fully appreciate the national spirit, Sir, before it is too late. Should we see the people more and more unfortunate, we shall be appalled by the grandeur of their distress—leading them, perhaps, to let loose the elements of a counter **INSURRECTION**. Let the South, too, heed this! The course, I implore, Sir, will make no difference to any honest and patriotic slave-owner. Slavery is surely dying out, as it can never, now, possibly, be tolerated amidst the mournful wail of the whole North and West; and no reasonable man will expect it. But let not slavery *taper* away; for, if so, it will drag down the country with it. Let the old **SINNER** go off in one decisive groan, by the thunder-clap of another Proclamation—coming, as at noon-day, to startle the world with its joyous advent, and producing a grateful, though pensive, response from a hundred thousand of our warriors slain. Is it not due to them? And heed not, Sir, the hollow idea that a mere Proclamation will not, of itself, effect anything. It will, Sir, wholly settle the question *morally*; and this is of so vital a nature that the falling off of the actual chains will assuredly follow. Will you *wait* Sir? Who will it benefit to do so? The Union slave-owner? It would leave him in an uncertainty worse even than to lose all at once, and would prevent him, perhaps, from receiving remuneration. Let him now depend upon a generosity, flowing from the soul of the nation, untrammelled by the complications of an unsettled state of things. Do as I suggest, Sir. Be bold! The People will sustain you. Wait not till the winter. Leave not an open door to the **LOBBY** intrigues of a selfish, unscrupulous, and *traitorous* partisanship. Leave not your country, Sir, to sink away in a sort of *inexplicable* ruin, like a field of wheat blighted by some unseen hand. And it would not be advancing a new principle, but simply carrying out the one you have already established in your late Proclamation; for if you would have a right, on the first of January, to free the slaves of States then not out of the Rebellion, you have a right, at this time, to free the slaves of States now in the Rebellion. I beseech you, Sir, to take, at once, this great step. I see, on the wide sphere of party, many conflicting principles at work, instigated by a selfish and pernicious spirit. Southern gold, too, is coursing in the veins of the individual traitor in our military, civic, and social circles; our streets, our domestic hearths, our Forums; at your levees, under shoulder-pieces and crinolines. Stop, at once, these numerous Partisan sources of a nearer and more bitter civil war. Leap, Sir, to the grand measure I here implore. It will go far to instantly put an end to the Rebellion, and to the extreme complications of the hour. Expose not, Sir, our children and children's children to

the dangers of an unsettled LIBERTY. Your power, on this subject, is unquestionable. To say nothing, as I have before remarked, of your mere civil power, nor of your power simply as commander-in-chief, your whole WAR power is clear; for the abolishing of slavery would weaken the enemy; and it is absolutely NECESSARY thus to weaken the enemy in order to *save the Nation*. The slaves *will*, rapidly, hear of their freedom; they will flee from the service of their oppressors; the South will lose their labor and their producing power, and her means of subsistence become less and less. Strike Home, Sir. Both weaken and assail the enemy simultaneously, and thereby place him between the upper and the nether millstone. I renewedly implore you, Sir, to make haste. Gracious God! Shall the work be protracted! Shall another hundred thousand of our brave soldiers—the flower, the honest chivalry of the Land, lay in bloody and promiscuous graves!—And a million more, per adventure, to glut the hate and inhumanity of the South! You, Sir, have Power; I can only appeal to you in behalf of the honesty, patriotism, and common sense of the people. Mistake not the People, Sir,—the underlying, everyday common sense of the people; they will sustain you against the many-tongued and *double-tongued* Politicians.

It is now midnight, Sir; I will sleep for an hour, as Cato slept before the battle of Pharsalia, and then will speak to you again.

I awake, Sir, and proceed:

As to your Power, of which, I have before spoken, will it be said that Maryland, though having, virtually, seceded, by her unmistakable hostility to the Union, at first, has, since, evinced symptoms of renewed allegiance? If so, my answer is, that in addition to the forfeiture of right as to slavery, under the Constitution, and consequently our release from constitutional obligation, it is now absolutely NECESSARY to the full influence of the *moral* power of the nation against the Rebellion, to have slavery extinguished, at once. It may be of immeasurable consequence to have it done to-day. In what, Sir, lies our strength, superior to that of the millions of the South, full of pride, and bitterness, and desperation, as well as prowess, and strategy? Is it a greater population, a longer purse, and our high and reliable order of courage? No, Sir; it is the spirit of FREEDOM—that spirit which is ordained to overcome, in the end, the slave power of all Earth. And we, at this moment, lack *much* of this spirit; and I fear, every day, every hour, lest this country should, after all, slip through our fingers, by some moral cause, which our more general and more united aversion to slavery would have overruled. I have never, Sir, been an Abolitionist, though always opposed, in my soul, to slavery; but I AM now; because the Constitution, being violated by the Rebellion, is no longer binding upon my conscience, and upon a manly sense of honor, under the constitutional compact; for this compact, as I have just said, has been violated, and therefore can no longer be set up in argument by the secession States; and besides, as also just suggested, the

Rebellion has created a State NECESSITY that presents to me a duty of great paramount force. And let not *individual Union* slaveholders be considered in the way of such inference; for the subject must be looked at as States, as a whole, in order to come to any definite action. And let not any State, returning to her allegiance, or even, if there were one, that had not, even virtually, thrown her weight in the UPRISE against the Union, claim exemption; for how could any one, or even two, or three, or four States, even wholly blameless, reasonably expect this Nation, under the circumstances of the case, still to have slavery trailing to her skirts—clotted with gore!

No, Sir, let slavery cease, altogether cease, and cease to-day. Why should it continue until the first of Janury? What is there in *that day*? The viper is on our hand, let us shake it off, now! If the Almighty is angry with this nation, He may hurl us to perdition before the first of January. Besides, who knows how long, after that period, Party, PARTY, *Party*, with its hundred voices, and hundred entanglements, and hundred sources of personal self-interest, may continue it on, from year to year, even to another generation, and another rebellion, the old ulcer breaking out anew! Ah, Sir, delay is dangerous here. Now is NOW; the Power is in your hands; and I wish the honor of the act to go down in history attached to your name. Listen, Sir! The great national heart swells! Now is the moment. The campaign of Maryland is auspicious! Avail yourself of the enthusiasm of the hour! Would that you might be inspired by the GENIUS of the land! Let FREEDOM move on with our banners!—

Oh Eagle! with thy golden thighs,
And eyes that pierce the upmost skies,
And beak, so chisel'd, strong and sharp,
And talons, vig'rous in their grasp,
And wings, so fearlessly that cleave,
The mightiest blasts o'er rolling seas,
And voice that screams along the strand:—
Save!—*Save* my own oppressed land!—
Bend seathing glances on the foe,
And bring us victory in our woe!

Make haste, Sir. Let the greatest voice of the war proceed from you. You are the constitutional and Gubernatorial representative of the whole Nation. Secure to us, Sir, this great point; not sought, as Heaven knows, by the nation; for we sought nothing but a compelled defence against an impudent and bloody assaultment, beginning in the deepest Treason, moving in thievish depredation, and hastening on to the flouting indignity of the bombardment of Sumpter. Oh! Sir, secure to us this one act—the FREEDOM of the Slave; that we may have, to show to our children and the children of our children, and on, from age to age, a monument WORTHY of our patriotism, our sacrifices, and our griefs; and that we may have something of National Pride, to sustain our souls, under the bitter remembrance of our Dead.

Oh! Sir, when the tramp of war shall cease to sound in our ears, and to move the martial chords of the wounded heart, and we come to count, and look for, the missing ones of our domestic hearths;—oh, God Almighty! how shall we sustain this renewed blow!—unless our poor human nature can have the proud shadow of *such* a monument, as well as faith, and hope in, the intercession of Christ? Oh, God! my tears flow apace, and my heart feels as though it were taken away, in view of our uncounted slain—those dear, honest faces whom we saw pass our streets to the field—hurried from the world before their time by this cruel Rebellion. And shall we not have a Monument—*SUCH* a monument? Shall we have none? And yet how can we, for holy shame, have any but with *such* memorial—the **TOTAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY!** And we **WILL** have it, with *this* holy and ennobling foundation; a monument that shall cover at least an unstinted acre, and rising until its apex shall be hidden in Heaven, in prayer to God, that He will sanctify to us this greatest woe that ever befel a Nation. Yes, our remote descendants will, on passing, say: This is the Monument of the great Rebellion, which cost us the lives of a million of brave men, and which saved from slavery four millions, and millions upon millions of their descendants, from the Tyrant's lash, forever. You need not be apprehensive, Sir, that a new proclamation, such as I suggest, would be irreconcilably inconsistent with the one recently issued; for that may well be speedily followed up, in these times of rapid development, of military operation, of vicissitude of various kinds, of pernicious combination and phases of Party, and upon your further and deeper reflection on your responsibility, as the great **HEAD** of the Nation; and besides, Sir, no one can ever suspect your well-known sincerity and candor of of anything like disingenuousness.

And is there any difficulty as to what shall be done with the people of color, escaping from the South, or remaining there when the Southern States shall be forced back into the Union, by the Union men within their borders, and by outside pressure? Not the least. In the latter case, they can remain, under the protection of law, to be provided,—the same equal laws that protect the white citizen; and be employed as the white citizen is employed, in various labor,—agricultural, mechanical, domestic, &c., and with reasonable wages. And as to the former case, I am sure every State should open its arms to receive this poor, wronged, oppressed Race. We have room enough, and employment enough, and can make them useful to themselves and to ourselves. Have we not vacant land enough ready to open its bosom to these children of toil;—fertile land,—happy homes, on which the cheering, *faithful* Sun, is sure daily to rise? Immense would be the productive power of this labor; its harvests of grain, and sugar, and cotton, and tobacco, and rice, and indigo, and provisions of every kind, for home consumption and for foreign markets; and besides, our mountains are full of gold,

and silver, and other precious fossils; and there are the fisheries; and the vast sphere of repairs, after this destructive, and displacing, and disfiguring war; and various new internal improvements, both State and National. We have mountains to cut through, and rivers to span, and swamps to drain; and there are, also, millions upon millions of Prairie, inviting the growth of hemp and flax.

Let us, Sir, yet be happy, notwithstanding our grief. Look ahead, and see where lay the breakers. I already hear them, and see the mist of their surf curling up, like the growing beard on the chin of a Giant. Grasp, Sir, with even a firmer hand, the helm of State. Suppose a succession of drawn battles, each costing us ten thousand men, *dead* on the field, and leaving everything undecided. Then, propositions of Peace—of compromise,—deceptive as Judas, and weak as water; proceeding directly from the South, or through the North and West, and made up of a mixed commission of Treason, cowardice, and of the ignoble love of repose, and prating, again, of those treacherous saws: “Go in Peace” and “Let us alone,” which meant, and means, to subjugate all of the country north of the Maryland line of Pennsylvania, and all west of the Ohio, converting it into vassal appendages of the proud South, with her Tribunes, and Consuls, and Dictators, and slaves. All this aided by the old GENUS—the old brazen, selfish, corrupt, and lying hack, called PARTY; and presenting, through factions in Congress, various TREATY propositions, acknowledging, at least, the partial success, and the Nationality of the South, and a Southern Dynasty of some kind—PALING the glory of our country Oh God! never—NEVER!—Sooner be the whole land sunk, a thousand miles below the surface;—that we may have an EXIT completely *antithetic* of what we once were:—Yes, let our lands, and cities, and Government, and armies, and navies—let them all topple down, and topple *in*, and the earth close over the last great *cicatrice* of war,—and SLAVES cultivate the surface *forever*; and, so help me God, I am ready, for one, to go into that chasm. Reinvigorate, Sir, your work. FREE THE SLAVE, and then you may exclaim, as did Germanicus to the Romans: “Behold this favorable omen!” Go thorough! Meet the Rebellion, by the immediate employment of this and all other possible stringencies, within the scope of *honorable* warfare!—Make SURE of the redemption of the country! Be BROAD in your views; for the Rebellion is like the conspiracy of Cataline—*everywhere*, as well as impious, and bloody,—deep in treachery, unscrupulous, full of lies and deceit, and *vulgar* in its audacity. It finds, in Davis, a Lentulus; in Beauregard, a Cethegus; and in Benjamin, a Gabinus. Bear in mind, Sir, that there are, still, unthought of combinations against us; and that you have yet to ferret them out, and guard against them, and defeat them beforehand. Save—SAVE the nation, that our citizens, abroad, may not learn, some day, that they have no country to return to. Save the country, QUICKLY, that the elements of Partisan controversy may not engender a civil conflict even nearer the National heart. Save the na-

tion as a WHOLE, for I, Sir, as one of the PEOPLE, will *hold you answerable*, that not one foot—one fraction of a foot of our Territory is severed from the loved map of the country, as it is. Save the Union, Sir, precisely as it was—excepting Slavery, our great national Sin, the cause of the war, and the cause of its continuance. Do not say, crush the Rebellion, that Slavery may fall; but crush SLAVERY that the Rebellion may fall. When men undertake to split timber, Sir, they should not begin at the wrong end. Let us take counsel of Nature. The very *wood* cries out against the American people that they do not know how to take hold of the great work on their hands—that they do not know where to put the entering wedge. They wait, Sir, for YOU.

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WASHINGTON CITY, Oct. 18, 1862.